

SLBC Buddhist Forums 1999

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(1) 99.01.06

In the recent years, people in this country have heard and learnt many things about Buddhism, much more than we have done all our life. This is 1999, the last year, not only of the century, but also of the millennium. We are in the privileged position of ushering in a new millennium. Then we should make the best of it, both for ourselves and the rest of mankind.

To-day we are starting a new series of discussions under the Buddhist Forum. In English they say 'the last straw breaks the camel's back'. But certainly we do not want to be found guilty of doing that.

We are not going to load you with any new stuff on Buddhism, as products of this or that new scientific experiment to establish the truths of Buddhism.

We will make an honest endeavour to go back to some of the basic things the Buddha has said about the human predicament. About men and women. Why we are here and what we should be doing with ourselves.

Please note that we have no communication lines with the unseen and the unknown world. We will fall back only on the words of the Buddha. And that from the earliest and the authentic texts, and not from mere hearsay.

We have already saved for you the Tripitaka in Pali in the Internet. Some of the English translations will also be made available soon.



Today we are going to open our discussion with four basic things about life, specially human life. Starting with what is visibly before us, it would be wiser to start with the humans. We hope it is already well known to you and clear to you that the Buddha spoke primarily of the world which is contained within this fathom-sized human body - *imasmim byāmamatte kalebare saviññānake samanake lokañ ca ahaṃ paññāpemi ...*

Under this subject, we shall talk on **Birth, life, death and rebirth**. We shall see how much we can do on a single day.

1. **Birth** - We shall begin with birth. In Buddhism, we know that birth immediately implies rebirth as well. But rebirth needs a fuller and more detailed discussion. We shall take it up separately.

Birth = mātāpettika-sambhavo. [Prajānārthaṃ striyah sr̥ṣṭhah sañjānārthañ ca māṇvah]. Biological genesis of life [of the human]. Yā tesam tesam sattānam tamhi tamhi sattanikāye jāti sañjāti okkanti nibbatti abhinibbatti khandhānam pātubhāvo āyatanānaṃ paṭilābho. Ayaṃ vuccati āvuso jāti [M.III.249]. Not a product of creation by any single authority.

What we inherit at birth from our parents and our own samsāric identity.

Yathā kammūpage satte

2. **Life** immediately implies the functioning of our pañcakkhandha under the stimulation of our sensory data. This results in the creation of what is correctly termed the pañca upādānakkhandha.

Our life process briefly is this on going process of: Cakkhunā rūpaṃ disvā piyarūpe rūpe sārājati appiyarūpe rūpe virajjati. Evaṃ anurodha-virodham āpanno hoti. This is human life and samsāra production in the process of living.

3. **Death** and what it means. In the long samsāric vision, it is Mīyati ca cavati ca uppajjati ca. In terms of the present worldly existence, note how beautifully the Buddha expresses it:

pahānā tinnam dhammānam rūpam passatha chaḍḍitam
 āyu usmā ca viññāṇaṃ yadā kāyaṃ jahantimaṃ
 apaviddho tadā seti parabhattaṃ acetanaṃ S.N.III. 143

Another way of looking at death is Kāyassa bheda parammaraṇā.

There are also new concepts of death such as **brain death**.

These are new areas in modern scientific thinking. They pertain to independent growth of a fetus within the uterus of a mother, including even a brain dead mother.

The physical growth of the child within the mother's womb appears to be designed to take place even without a willed direction of the mother. We produce below what we consider, according to Buddhist teachings, to be very precise and very bold new thinking at world level on this issue of 'the mother and the unborn child'.

" The single-celled fertilized ovum, or later developing embryonic human being within her uterus, cannot, by any stretch of imagination, be considered part of her body. This new living being has a genetic code that is totally different from the cells of the mother's body. He or she is, in truth, a completely separate growing human being and can never be considered part of the mother's body.

Does she have a right to her own body? Yes. But this is not part of her own body. It is another person's body."

[ABORTION By Dr. & Mrs. J.C. Willke. September 1990.p.25]

This idea of the identity of the growing up child within the uterus of the mother, with complete independence from her, is amply supported by the story of

Trisha Marshall reported by Peter Singer. Twenty-eight year old Trisha was shot in the head on 19 April 1993. She was declared brain dead. At the time she was seventeen weeks pregnant. A respirator, together with other medical assistance like nutrients passed down a tube through her nose and into her stomach, kept her bodily functions continuing. She continued to live for three and a half months. On 3 August, a baby boy was delivered by a caesarian birth. A doctor from the hospital described the baby as 'cute'. [Peter Singer - Rethinking Life & Death 1994. p.9ff.]

4. **Rebirth** - This is the re-commencement of the samsāric life process or bhava in a new existence.

Tato tvaṃ Bāhiya neva idha na huraṃ na ubhayamantarenā' ti... Ye pana 'ubhayamantarenā' ti padaṃ gahetvā antarābhavam nāma icchanti tesam tam micchā. Antarābhavassa hi bhāvo Abhidhamme paṭikkhitto yeva. Antarā 'ti vacanam pana vikappantaradīpanaṃ. Tasmā ayam ettha attho. N 'eva idha na huraṃ aparō vikappo na ubhayaṃ 'ti. Atha vā anantaradesanā ' ti vacanam pana vikappantaradīpanam. Tassa attho: n 'eva idha na huraṃ ubhayamantare pana na aññathā naṃ atthī ti. Ye pi ca antarāparinibbāyi sambhavesī ti ca imesaṃ suttapadānam atthaṃ ayoniso gahetvā atthi yeva antarābhavo ' ti vadanti....
Paramatthadīpani Udānaṭṭhakathā SHB. p.61



(2) 99.01.13

1. Our spiritual goal as Buddhists. Liberation *vis-a-vis* Enlightenment

The highest spiritual achievement in Buddhism is labelled as **Nirvana**. The goal one arrives at in Nirvana is the termination of the painful samsaric process of births and deaths. In Nirvana, literally there is **no more turning of the wheel of life** = *yattha vaṭṭaṃ na vaṭṭati*. That is why this goal is also called *nibbuti* as in

laddhā mudhā nibbutim bhunjamānā.

The Bodhisatva on the attainment of Buddhahood is said to have expressed this idea in this manner: *Ayaṃ antimā jāti natthi 'dāni punabbhavo* = 'This is my last birth. I shall not be born again'. All our spirituality has to be geared towards this goal. Are we well and truly aware of this and are we adequately conscious of this.

In their regular wish and prayer, most Theravadin Buddhists of Sri Lanka never fail to say 'Let us meet the Buddha Maitreya and gain our Nirvana - Maitri Budun da"ka Nivan dakeeva'.

But the real truth that the Buddhists of today must take serious note of is that all those who reached this goal in early Buddhism are also referred to as arahants who worked very hard indeed to get rid of all their defilements or kilesas to achieve this end. That is why the arahants are referred to as *khīṇāsavā* or those who have destroyed or got rid of their defilements.

It is unmistakably very much a self-help process. One cannot get it done through another. And certainly not through a cumulative load of collected merit. The real tool which brings this Nirvana within the reach of every samsaric being is said to be wisdom or *paññā*. It is also called *ñāṇa*. [*Sammā ñāṇassa sammā vimutti pahoti* = He who has gained wisdom gains his release]. This wisdom is also referred to as *bodhi*. This is why the Noble Eightfold Path or the *Arī aṭa maga* needs two more items added to it to get one to his final liberation as *arahant*.

Dasahi aṅgehi samannāgato arahā ' ti vuccati.

So today in the less dogmatic Buddhist world, people are agreeable to calling the Buddhist path to liberation as *bodhiyāna*. Looking at Buddhism from a very practical angle, we feel that talking of a threefold enlightenment or *tun tarā bodhi* does not make much meaning.

2. Emergence of the concept of Noble Truths as vital link to Enlightenment

Now let us turn to the life of the Buddha and see what he himself says in his first sermon, the Dhammacakkappavattana, about these noble truths in relation to his own achievement of enlightenment or Buddhahood.

Yāvākīvañ ca me bhikkhave imesu catusu ariyasaccesu evaṃ tiparivaṭṭaṃ dvādasākāraṃ yathābhūtaṃ ñāṇadassanaṃ na suvisuddhaṃ ahosi n' eva tāvā ' haṃ bhikkhave sadevake loke samāraṃ sabrahmade sassamaṇabrāhmaṇiyā pajāya sadevamanussāya anuttaraṃ sammāsambodhiṃ abhisambuddho ' ti paccaññāsiṃ S.N. V. 422f.

3. Originally conceived as Dukkha and Nirodha, i.e. Truths 1 and 3

Pubbe cā ' haṃ bhikkhave etarahi ca dukkhañ c ' eva paññāpemi dukkhassa ca nirodhaṃ. at M.N. I.140 Alagaddūpama: Both in the past as well as now, I preach about Dukkha and its cessation. **Further probe reveals Truths 2 and 4: Samudaya and Magga.**



(3) 99.01.27

1. Noble Truths of Buddhism as a realization of the realities of life.

The Noble Truths are a recurrent theme on the lips of the Buddha and hence a significantly major component of Buddhist teachings. They are an outcome of the realistic observation of the phenomenon of life: of birth, decay, disease and death. How could Siddhartha have achieved this? Certainly not *Deus ex machina*: A divine machination? On the other hand, could it not be a *samsarically* transmitted maturity of human wisdom and judgement? Note what he says as Bodhisatta.

Pubb 'eva me abhisambodhā anabhisambuddhssa bodisattass ' eva sato

etadahosi. Kiccham vatā 'yam loko āpanno jāyati ca jīyatica mīyati ca cavati ca uppajjati ca.

Evidently the Bodhisatta as he grew up in the household would have seen them more than enough, in his day to day life. If we wish to thank the devas for bringing before him these as four grim reminders of the realities of life or ***satara pera-nimiti***, please continue doing so. But we do not believe the Bodhisatta was that dull as to need divine intermediaries or divine informants. Give these as facts to our children and to the world at large in an acceptable way.

In the light of these remarks, let us clarify to our listeners the significance of the Buddha's very pronounced remark that he always - *pubbe c 'āham etarahi ca* - preached about ***dukkha*** and its termination - ***dukkhañca aham paññāpemi dukkhassa ca nirodham.***

Reality of ***dukkha*** and its requirement of ***pariññeyya*** leading finally to ***pariññāta.***

2. The purpose and scope of Buddhist Way of Life

Let us also take from the above quote the words ***mīyati ca cavati ca uppajjati ca*** and talk a little bit more here about ***uppatti, bhava*** and ***punabbhava.*** ***Bhava*** is the infinitely vast continuous stream of existence. The shorter spans of it between each birth and death and its repetition brings about the concept of ***punabbhava.*** The act of birth in each such phase is referred to in Pali as ***punabbhavabhinibbati.***

Let us get a clearer concept of what ***bhava*** is and its relationship to ***upādāna.*** The whole process of spiritual development or ***paṭipadā*** in Buddhism depends entirely on this.

Hence ***upādāna*** reduction becomes, and indeed has to become the main thrust of Buddhist spirituality. That is why all references to the attainment of Nirvana are associated with the negation or elimination of ***upādāna: anupādā parinibbānattham.***

Buddhist way of life is **not mere worship and prayer nor incessant supplication to divinities** for the favour of this or that need fulfillment: be it success with the possession of more money in gold and silver, elevation of professional or social status, plentiful gift of talented children etc.

Can Sri Lankan Buddhists of today honestly say that as Buddhists they do not direct their thoughts in that direction, secretly or openly. We expect no answers or excuses from you. But please remember it is you who will have to pay for the purchases you make.

Buddhist books say: You know it yourself, O man, whether it is true or false - ***Attā te purisa jānāti saccam vā yadi vā musā.***



(4) 99.02.10

1. From the reality of **dukkha** let us now move over to its genesis or **samudaya**. We have repeatedly pointed out in our discussions that **dukkha** is multi-dimensional. The fact that we have a physical existence in this world [***jātiyā satī***] is in itself the very basis of dukkha. That is why we are subject to decay, disease and death - ***jātipaccayā jarā-maraṇam.***

In our mental life, there is a far greater amount of **dukkha under** which are listed the following: ***soka-prideva-dukkha-domassa-upāyāsa.*** Give further explanation. ***Samkhittena pañcupādānakkhandha dukkhā.***

The Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, in its brief introduction, presents **dukkha** as being three-fold in origin. It is born of the human desire or ***taṇhā*** for sensory pleasures of the world. This is labelled as ***kāma-taṇhā.*** This is nothing other than faulty gratification of sense desires. This brings about pain of mind as well as of body due to our own maladjustment to the world we live in. On a long term basis, it also brings about painful samsaric involvement. Our ***karma*** as we live in the world is characterised by its very basic nature of grasping or ***upādāna.***

Upādāna is no more than regeneration-productive action or *punar-bhava-janakam karma*.

Two more segments of *taṇhā* are also known. They are the inborn desire to continue being in samsara or *bhava-taṇhā*. [*māradheyyam pahātave*]. The other is the equally inborn urge to terminate life or *vibhava-taṇhā*. This is perhaps through the mere dissatisfaction with life, on account of the observable reality of the human predicament, but in situations where no meaningful solution is sought via its origin as is propounded in Buddhism. Caught up between these, we let ourselves to be stupefied. In this process, we become helpless victims of the polarisation of *lobha* [on account of *bhava-taṇhā*] and *dosa* [on account of *vibhava-taṇhā*], of being attracted to or repelled by *kāma-rāga* and *paṭigha* [i.e. lustful attraction and direct hostility]. In the same way, *abhijjhā* and *vyāpāda* or covetousness and animosity, though differently named, are as much *dukkha* generating agencies.

Under *dukkha*, we have clearly pointed out that the validity and the vitality of the Truths lie in their being actualized in one's life in the three-fold manner of *satya*, *kriya* and *kṛita*. So *dukkha* was to be fully comprehended, understood and met face to face. This we called *pariññeyyam*. This, when finally accomplished, came to be called *pariññātam*.

In the same way, we have now to remind our listeners that the cause of suffering or *samudaya* is to be personally relinquished and given up by each one. That is *taṇhā pahātābbā*. It is the total abandoning of *taṇhā - tassā yeva taṇhāya asesā-virāga-nirodho cāgo paṭinissaggo mutti anālayo* [S.V.421] that brings about Nirvāṇa or the complete termination of *samsāra*.

2. Nirodha and Dukkha ca nirodha or the termination of the entire mass of suffering.

Do we need to remind our listeners once again that the mission of the Buddha on his enlightenment was to make known to the world ' the existence of *dukkha* and the possibility of its elimination or *nirodha* ' [*dukkhañ ca aham*

paññāpemi dukkhassa ca nirodham].

So here we are, now dealing with *nirodha* or the third of the Four Truths. It is nothing other than *nibbāna* or Nivana. Process wise it is aptly described as ' the total abandoning, complete cessation, the surrender, the discarding of that craving, the total release and the non-attachment [*tassā yeva tanhāya asesavirāga-nirodho cāgo paṭinissaggo mutti anālayo* S.V.421]. In today's discussion we have to, to the best of our ability, indicate to our listeners what Nirvana is like, both process wise and product wise.

It is correct to say that the concept of Nirvana has gripped the whold world today. It would in fact be more correct to say that the world has gripped Nirvana, and that from many different angles. They choose to be related to it in some way. To most people, it is something wonderfully wholesome, with an unflinching breath of fresh air, with no hidebound traditions and dogmas. It is not under any monopolistic controls, with reservations for any one at any time. It is freely accessible. It is also unassailable on account of any advances in science or technology. It needs no revisionist undertakings to keep abreast with modern thinking.

With *khīṇāsava* or the *arahant* as the ideally accomplished Buddhist disciple, it would be wise to view Nirvana, process wise, as the total elimination of samsāric defilements. This is called *āsavakkhaya*. It is also called 'destruction of craving' or *taṇhakkhaya*.

Product wise, Nirvana has these beautiful adjectives which describe it as being 'what samsāra is not'. Note words like *ajātaṃ* [where no birth is] and *amataṃ* [where no death is].

With these descriptions, do we realise that Nirvana is what we can get here itself, while we are still alive?

Does it make sense then to ask as to what happens to the *tathāgata* after death: *hoti tathāgato parammaraṇā*. Note the Buddha's reply: *Diṭṭhevā ' haṃ bhikkhave dhamme tathāgatam ananuvejjo ' ti vadāmi* [M.N.I.140].

And a clearer explanation as to what happens to a person, both here and hereafter, on the attainment of enlightenment is found in the following. ***Evam vimutta-cittaṃ kho bhikkhave bhikkhuṃ sa-indā devā sa-brahmakā sa-pajāpatikā anvesaṃ nādhigacchanti idaṃ nissitaṃ tathāgatassa viññāṇan 'ti.*** Ibid.

Nibbuto / parinibbuto



(5) 99.02.24

1. The Buddhist Goal of Nirvana.

This is the end of Samsāra and all ills associated with it. Hence it comes to be called ***nirodha*** or ' **complete ceasing to be**'. It is undeniably the termination of everything that is both physical or material as well as of mental and psychological which are associated with Samsāric existence.

I think we can correctly invoke the concluding verses of the Kevaddha Sutta of the Dīgha Nikāya in explaining this position.

*Kattha āpo ca paṭhavī ca tejo vāyo na gādhati
Kattha dīghañ ca rassañ ca anuṃ thūlaṃ subhāsubhaṃ
Kattha nāmañ ca rūpaṃ ca asesṃ uparujjhatī ti.*

Where do these elements of water, earth, heat and wind operate not?
Where do concepts of long and short, big and small, good and bad,
And where does Name and Form completely cease to be?

Tatra veyyākaraṇaṃ bhavati. = Herein is its explanation.

*Viññāṇaṃ anidassanaṃ anantaṃ sabbato pabham
Ettha āpo ca paṭhavī ca tejo vāyo na gādhati*

*Ettha dīgahañ ca rassañ ca anum thūlaṃ subhāsubhaṃ
 Ettha nāmañ ca rūpañ ca asesam uparujjhati
 Viññāṇassa nirodhena etth ' etṃ uparujjhati. D.N.I.223*

Where **Consciousness** is undemonstrable, infinite and totally radiant.
 Here elements of water, earth, heat and wind operate not.
 Here do [quantitative and qualitative]concepts
 Of long and short, big and small, good and bad,
 And here do Name and Form completely cease to be.
 And by the cessation of **Consciousness**, everything here ceases to be.

2. Somebody would now legitimately pose the question ' Who then experiences Nirvāna?'

Let us fall back on the suttas for authentic internal support.

Here is **Alagaddūpama Sutta** [M.N.I.140] where we are told that in the case of a liberated monk [*vimutta-cittaṃ bhikkhuṃ*], not even devas or Brahmās would discover the **Consciousness** of such a person as **being located in or hinged on anything of the world -- *anvesam nādigacchanti idam nissitam tathāgatassa viññāṇan ' ti.***

But do not forget the fact that such a liberated person is still living in he world, as much as the Buddha himself did for full forty-five years.

3. What then is the difference between the liberated and the unliberated.

The different degrees and stages they are in? Let us view this in terms the four *maggas* of **Sotāpatti**, **Sakadāgāmi**, **Anāgāmi** and **Arahant**.

We may also view them from their positions in terms of *jhanic* development. **Jhānas** 1-4 and 5-8.

4. The Way to Nirvana or Dukkha-nirodha-gāmani-paṭipadā Ariya-saccaṃ

We have made an all-out endeavour so far to explain to our listeners the

nature of the goal which the Buddhists aspire to reach through their spiritual striving and development. This goal is Nirvana. No more no less. Traditionalists would speak of it as the end or the absence of *taṇhā*. We have viewed it both process wise and product wise.

We have clearly indicated that reaching Nirvana is something that has to be accomplished while one is still alive. And we would dare to say **while one is human**. It is not something beyond death or beyond this living process. This is to be clearly visualized. Having achieved it in this very life, or in any life beyond this, one lives to enjoy the fruits thereof up to the time of one's death.

The question as to **What happens to the liberated person after death** is dismissed as an irrelevant one. For he has already gathered the anticipated harvest while he is alive. The Buddha is said to have sat under the Bodhi Tree, enjoying this bliss of release: *vimutti-sukha-paṭisamvedī*.

5. Now let us focus our attention on the path leading to Nirvana. This is the Eight-fold Way.

Let me begin by pointing out that in Sri Lanka, we often use the concept of the circle or *cakra* a little too much while talking about and explaining religious concepts. It has often resulted in creating rather gross misconceptions. We speak of *bhava cakra* and *samsāra cakra*.

While talking about *bhava* and *samsāra* as above, we do often use the imagery of the wheel or circle. Let us get this clear in our own minds. It is true that both terms *bhava* and *samsāra* are vast and universal in application about life. But do not miss this point that their application is strictly personal and individual. Each one has his or her own allocation, distinctly mapped out. They all flow or run from one end to another, from a past to the present. But of course in diverse directions, depending on where one is destined to go. In any and every case, where it started is declared to be hardly visible.

The texts put it precisely as *pubbā koṭi na paññāyati*. This makes it quite

clear that the concept is not one of a circle where the two ends are joined and welded together. It is more precisely one of spiral or cyclical continuous run. On completing a circle once, it is agreed that the next circular movement will invariably pass through another set of similar points. But they are not the same points of the previous circle. The process, it must be clearly understood, is not a mere repetition, but a **repetitive continuation**.

6. We look upon the Eight-fold Way as having the same linear rhythm: *anupubba-sikkhā, anupubba-kiriya anupubba-paṭipadā.*

It starts from a very specific point and going in a progressive forward movement, ends likewise in a well decided point, a point from where, **if we read our Buddhist texts with accuracy and precision**, we are led to a couple of further stages or states in order to reach our goal of Release.

The Eight-fold Way is declared a track or path, i.e. *magga* along which one moves in the direction of *nibbāna* or Nirvana. This Nirvana may also be referred to as liberation or *vimutti*. This is also the goal we refer to as being an *arahant*. In other words this is where *samsāra* ends.

Let us announce emphatically here that both *sammā vimutti* and *sammā ñāṇa* as Nos. 9 and 10, which come after *sammā samādhi*, i.e. the last item of the Eight-fold Way, and lead to this final point, lie clearly beyond the Eight-fold Way. In such a context, we cannot conceive of the Eight-fold Way as being of circular movement.

7. Clarity with regard to the ground-plan of the Eight-fold Way.

It is abundantly clear that this Way or *magga* endeavours and strives hard to correct and regulate the life style of the humans. Mark the words **correct** and **regulate**. That is its primary concern. Have we ever reckoned with this? Humans are, to a greater or lesser degree, wrapped up in ignorance or putting it differently, they lack correct understanding or awareness. Almost with regard to everything they do. Even knowing their own identity. This human malady is

referred to, on a grosser basis, as *avijjā*. On a narrower and more specific basis, it is incorrect vision or *micchā-dīṭṭhi*.

If we take this approach to the study of the Eight-fold Way, it does not surprise any one that traditionally the Eight-fold Way begins with *sammā-dīṭṭhi* or **corrected vision**, i.e. vision corrected in the Buddhist way. But we know of neo-traditionalists from many quarters who introduce the Eight-fold Way with *sammā-vācā* or correct speech. This is the third item in the list. They claim to do so for practical reasons.

8. Moral Norms must precede the life style of a people.

But our immediate question is **What is the yard-stick** or **What is the justification** for insisting on **correct speech** as an item of morality? It has to be the conformity to a particular tradition. This is what makes **corrected vision** or *sammā-dīṭṭhi* the indispensable first step to start with.

It is explained as the **initiation to the scriptural tradition of Buddhism**. The Pali for this is *āgato imaṃ saddhammaṃ*. One gets it through a source external to oneself. Our Buddhist texts present it as *parato ghoso*. We recognize it as the *pariyatti sāsana*. This must be further nourished through one's own intellectual grasp and scrutiny, referred to as *yoniso ca manasikāro* as a further stage in spiritual culture.

This *sammā-dīṭṭhi* is thus the initial grooming for the spiritual culture propounded through the Eight-fold Way. The Eight-fold Way is therefore referred to as being heralded by this corrected vision or being *sammā-dīṭṭhi-pubbaṅgamā*

It is also clear that activity process in life begins with thinking. We have to formulate ideas and put them into action. The Eight-fold Way therefore steps in here to regulate the process of human thinking and we call this second stage *sammā-saṅkappo* or right thinking.

It is only after getting a real and solid foundation on these basic requirements that the Eight-fold Way attempts to correct and regulate the life style of humans.

We do not speak of morality without the basics or bearings of morality.

9. Buddhists are not required to be moral through fear of a punishing divine authority or heaven-sent punishments.

Life-style correctives are three in number. They are numbers 3,4 and 5 of the Way, covering speech, action and the manner of making one's living: *vācā kammanto ājīvo*. Whether one likes it or not, they have to be regulated and corrected.

This is where states or governments have to get their bearings right in administering state policy. This is why new thinking in the world today insists that **Religion is the missing dimension in Statecraft**. This is the title of a book published by the Oxford University Press in Chicago in 1994.

10. The Eight-fold Way and the need to handle First things First.

Once humans in the world, whether they be men or women, leaders of nations or nations who are being led, have been put right so far, first with regard to their philosophy of life, and second with regard to their thinking on their policies for action, then the rest of what we would call **spiritual life of humans** looks after itself.

Then they are well and truly **established within honourable norms of behaviour**. That is behaviour good enough for decent men and women.

But society today from top to bottom, with their politics and their economic and industrial policies, have eaten into those norms of behaviour.

So do not then turn towards religions with dismay and despair, and think that they have failed in their mission. We have ripped them naked. Point the accusing finger towards the society itself, which **in its quest for money has been led to look upon religion as the unwanted baby which is to be aborted**.

11. Basic life-style grooming and the commencement of spiritual growth.

Once humans regulate their thought, word and deed and are thoroughly

scrupulous about the way they make a living, they have already acquired the correct norms of good religious living. Their life style conforms to the first five items of the eightfold way.

Then **item No.6** or *sammā vāyāmo* becomes more or less self-operative. One keeps striving to move away from evil, clearing evil that is already arisen within and also preventing the arising of evil anew. Acquiring goodness anew and fostering goodness that is already within. This is the real **commencement of spiritual growth**.

This should work like a space-shuttle which has torn itself away from the earth's gravitational pull. It should soon be in orbit.

12. As No. 7, *sammā sati* would now take its rightful place.

Sammā sati is a serious and more than mundane plane. One has by now already imbibed the spirit of Buddhism. One freely handles the four forms of developing mindfulness. These are the *cattāro satip-aṭṭhānā*. In consequence of this, one invariably gets to the next stage of **No.8** in *Sammā samādhi*.



(6) Buddhist Forum: New Recordings in advance

1. A. On being a Buddhist: Taking upon oneself the Threefold Refuge or Tisarana

A Buddha appears in the world: *Tathāgato loke uppajjati araham sammā sambuddho ...*

The announcement of his teaching to the world: a. *Kicchena me adhigataṃ halaṃ ' dāni pakāsitum. b. So dhammaṃ deseti ādikalyāṇaṃ majjhe kalāṇam ...*

Reacting to his message: Taking refuge in Him and His teaching: *Dve-vācaka Saraṇa-gamana* -- Tapassu Bhalluka, Pañcavaggiyā bhikkhu,

Yasakulaputta.

1. B. The Concept of the Buddha: its historical development backwards

The six Buddhas of the past from Vipassi downwards are known from the Mahāpadāna Sutta of the Digha Nikaya and the Samyutta Nikaya. Feeling of a need to produce historical antecedents, in support and justification of the life activities of Buddha Gotama.

We also find them referred to in the Theragatha as showing the way which Gotama followed.

*Yen' eva maggena gato Vipassi ten' eva maggena Sikhī ca Vessabhu
Kakusandha Konāgamano ca Kassapo tenañjasena agamāsi Gotamo.* [Thag. v. 490 Sarabhangā Thera.]

Even pre-illumination observations of Siddhartha about the nature of life and the world are traced back in both those sources above to Buddha Vipassi. [S.II. pp.5-10 & D.II.p.30ff.]

Unlike the Samyutta, **the Mahāpadāna even takes up**, in a more or less legendary manner, the vision of the four *nimittas* [D.II.21ff.] which the young Bodhi-aspirant Siddhartha sees as precursors to his thoughts of renunciation.

The Samyutta [S.II.5ff.] has nothing about the *nimittas* but only takes up the Bodhisatta's observations on the very natural events of life like decay, disease and death.

2. A. The Bodhi-aspiration of Gotama is traced back to Dipankara as the first of twenty-four Buddhas of the past. It was at his feet that he made the resolve or *abhinihāra* to become a *Sammāsambudha* like Dipankara. Buddha Dipankara in turn gave Sumedha Tāpasa the *niyata vivaraṇa* or the definite assurance that he was going to be a Buddha at a later date: *Buddho loke bhavissati*.

Here we note the increase of the number of Buddhas from six to twenty-four. It is interesting and equally vital to note that the Jains too have a similar number of Tirthankaras who are the equivalents of our Buddhas.

Having made the resolve to become a Buddha in the presence of Buddha Dipankara, and having had the assurance given to him, now there comes the beautifully worked out new theory of *pāramitā* or *pāramiyo* which are ten in number through which the Buddha-aspirant has to develop his spiritual culture. Therefore they are called *buddha-kāraṇa-dhamma*. In the presence of each of the succeeding twenty-four Buddhas, the Bodhisatta has to obtain the assurance or *vyākaraṇa* that he is going to be the future Buddha. This gave rise to the later development of the grand concept of *Sūvisi-vivaraṇa* or **Assurances in the presence of twenty-four Buddhas** which extensively developed in Sri Lankan Buddhist art and literature.

This story is already widely known by the early centuries of the Christian era. A stone sculpture of Shotoruk in Afghanistan of about the 3rd century depicts this scene of Dipankara Buddha assuring Sumedha of his future Buddhahood. This is well before Sri Lanka's glorious days of Anuradhapura.

2. B. It is in the Buddhavamsa that this idea of *pāramitā* comes to be introduced and elaborated. As a Canonical text, its position, along with the Apadāna and Cariyāpiṭaka is even being challenged by some of the literary traditions of Sri Lanka.

It is the **Jātakatṭhakathā** which gives us the entire collection of 550 stories

which portray the Bodhisatta perfecting his *pāramaiyo*, during his births both as human and animal.

The **Jātakatṭhakathā** picks up its source material from the Buddhavamsa which is a metrical composition, and as it claims, presents it in prose for easier understanding.

The **Cariyāpiṭaka** also gives us details about the Bodhisatta perfecting his career as a Buddha aspirant.

3. A. Here we see clearly the keenness of Buddhist followers to glorify the character of their master, pushing it through time and space, and blending it with human and superhuman qualities. This may well be taken as being within the tradition of the Theravadins. At least they have found their way, without much difficulty, into the fold of Pali Buddhist literature.

4. A Taking refuge in the Dhamma

We have already discussed at length the concept of Buddha within the **Tisarana** formula. We examined the historicity of the person of the Buddha as a person who was born in India in the 6th century B.C. and is known to have lived there for full eighty years and the development of the Buddha concept through the successive generations of religious speculation. We know now the history of the proliferation of the Buddha concept both in the Theravada as well as in the Mahayana.

The Theravada or Pali Buddhism has at its peak twenty-eight Buddhas in all, together with even three preceding Buddha Dīpankara, who presided over Sumedha's resolve to become a future Buddha, together with their beautiful version of the **Pāramitā** and the *Sūvisi-vivarāṇa*. The Mahayana has its concept of **Amida** and the *Tri-kāya* doctrine.

4.B Now let us turn to the second item in the Saraṇa-gamana, viz.

Dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi.

We have to note two things here very carefully. 1. The Buddha in the world, without delivering his message to mankind, would have been a terrible disaster. This is the plea with which Brahmā Sahampati prevailed upon the Buddha to preach his newly discovered teaching to mankind. 2. The Buddha identifies himself totally with his Dhamma: ***Yo dhammaṃ passati so maṃ passati. Yo maṃ passati so dhammaṃ passati.***

Discuss in full the Buddha's reluctance to preach his dhamma and the subsequent request by Brahmā to deliver that message, at least for the sake of the few who in its absence would tend to deteriorate.

Salvation seekers in Buddhism therefore have to necessarily take refuge in the Dhamma. That is why the Buddhists, while making their adorations to the Dhamma, pray tribute to it calling it ***opanayiko***. That means that the Dharma leads one to the goal that one wishes for.

4.C Let us examine a few of Buddha's own observations about the Dharma he propounds.

1. He tells us that his teaching to the world pertains only to human unhappiness or ***dukkha*** and to the cessation there of [***dukkhassa ca nirodhaṃ***]. This truly has to be so because this alone provides the answer to the problem he was confronted with, namely that of human suffering in ***Samsāra***.

2. He also tells us that his teachings 'go against the grain' [***paṭisota-gāmi***] of common worldly thinking. This is complimentary to the observation that the world in general is inclined to grab and get attached to things of the world which people believe give them delight. This is vividly described as ***ālayaratā kho panā 'yam pajā ālayasammuditā...***= "Delighting in and being cheered by" is generally the nature of the world. Once we delight in things it is too much a demand to ask ourselves to give them up: ***paṭinissaggo***.

